FORESTRY ISSUES

(ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATURAL RESOURCES DISASTERS)

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS, FAMILY FARMS, AND ENERGY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIRST CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

H.R. 1011

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATURAL RESOURCES DISASTERS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1989

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS, FAMILY FARMS, AND ENERGY,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:40 a.m., in room 1302, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Harold L. Volkmer (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Olin, Stallings, Jontz, Johnson, Harris, Morrison, Marlenee, Smith, Schuette, and Herger.

Also present: Representative E (Kika) de la Garza, chairman of the committee, and Representative Don Young.

Staff present: Bert R. Peña, staff director; Vernie Hubert and Fred J. Clark, associate counsels; John E. Hogan, minority counsel; Glenda L. Temple, clerk; Timothy P. De Coster, James R. Lyons, and Kraig Naasz.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. HAROLD L. VOLKMER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI

Mr. VOLKMER. The subcommittee will come to order.

The Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms, and Energy is meeting this morning to review two matters.

Our first subject is H.R. 1011, a bill to create a National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters, introduced by the gentleman from California, Mr. Herger, and several of our colleagues. The commission would advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the rehabilitation needs of National Forest System lands affected by wildfires and on related matters.

Following our consideration of H.R. 1011, we will turn our attention to Alaska, to the Tongass National Forest. Our members and witnesses who participated in last year's hearing on the Tongass will recall we had a very thorough review of issues associated with management of the forest, and it is our intent today to build on that record rather than simply repeat what was said then.

In particular, we will be interested in discussing the extent to which the statutory timber mandates and the long-term contracts constrain or otherwise affect balanced management of the Tongass and planning for its resources.

In order to give the committee a starting place in our consideration of this issue, Mr. Morrison and I have introduced H.R. 1368, the Tongass Timber Management Act. The bill encompasses most

of the basic features of interest to this committee from the final version of the Tongass Timber Reform Act which was approved by the House last year.

H.R. 1368 would repeal the permanent annual appropriation for the Tongass timber program as well as the timber offer mandate of 4.5 billion board feet per decade. In addition, the bill would direct the Forest Service to renegotiate the long-term contracts, and to increase the emphasis given to not-timber resources on the forest. We do not intend it as a statement of where we necessarily expect to end up, but it is a reasonable place for us to begin.

This issue is no less complicated or controversial than when we began to wrestle with it last year. However, we have an obligation to our members to review the matter and provide our comments on what action ought to be taken.

On another matter, I want to advise our members that we will caucus tomorrow morning at 10 in room 1336A to discuss recommendations to the Budget and Appropriations Committees for funding of Forest Service programs and activities. I hope that the members of this subcommittee and others will all be able to attend.

[H.R. 1011 follows:]

I

101ST CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1011

To provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters, to provide for increased planning and cooperation with local firefighting forces in the event of forest fires, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 9, 1989

Mr. HERGER (for himself, Mr. MARLENEE, Mr. HOLLOWAY, Mr. SCHUETTE, Mr. SHUMWAY, Mr. MORRISON of Washington, and Mr. ROBERT F. SMITH) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

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A BILL

To provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters, to provide for increased planning and cooperation with local firefighting forces in the event of forest fires, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

TITLE I—NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATURAL RESOURCES DISASTERS

SEC. 101. (a) Congress finds that—

(1) the natural fire disasters that occurred in 1987 and 1988 in Western and Southeastern States burned

nearly seven and one-half million acres of Federal, State, and private land;

(2) these fires have altered the ability of Federal Government agencies to effectively manage the lands for timber production, fish and wildlife habitation, and recreation for future use by the American public; and

(3) the communities in and surrounding the areas affected by the fires have suffered economic and social losses;

(b) It is hereby declared to be the policy of Congress to respond to these disasters and prepare for potential disasters by reviewing the financial and cultural results to the affected communities, and by adopting such policies as are needed to ensure an effective and efficient recovery.

SEC. 102. (a) There is hereby established a National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters which shall study the affects of such fires and make recommendations concerning the steps necessary for a smooth and timely transition from the loss of such natural resources.

(b) The Commission shall be composed of twenty-five members who are Federal, State, and local officials, timber industry representatives, and community leaders, to be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. Not fewer than twenty members shall be appointed from nominations submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture by the following Members

of Congress, after consultation with other Members of Congress who sit on the specified committee of the respective House of Congress—

(1) The chairman of the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives.

(2) The ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives.

(3) The chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(4) The ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(c) A vacancy on the Commission shall be filled by the Secretary of Agriculture.

(d) The Commission shall elect a chairperson from among the members.

(e) The Commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson or a majority of the members of the Commission.

SEC. 103. (a) The National Commission on the Natural Resources Disasters shall study the effects of fires on—

(1) the economic stability of the affected communities;

(2) the availability of sufficient timber supplies to meet future industry needs;

(3) the fish and wildlife habitats;

(4) the recreation in the affected areas;

(5) the watershed and water quality protection plans in effect within National Forest System lands;"

(6) the ecosystems in the areas; and

(7) management plans of the affected National Forest System lands.

(b) On the basis of its study, the Commission shall make findings and develop recommendations for consideration by the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to the future management of National Forest System lands and community redevelopment activities and programs.

(c) The Commission shall submit to the Secretary of Agriculture, not later than December 1, 1990, a report containing the results of its study and recommendations based on such results.

SEC. 104. (a) The heads of executive agencies, the General Accounting Office, the Office of Technology Assessment, and the Congressional Budget Office shall provide the Commission such information as may be required to carry out its duties and functions.

(b) Members of the Commission shall service without compensation for work on the Commission. While away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of duties of the Commission, members of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of

subsistence, as authorized by law for persons serving intermittently in the Government service under section 5703 of title 5 of the United States Code.

(c) To the extent there are sufficient funds available to the Commission in advance under section 105, and subject to such rules as may be adopted by the Commission, the Commission, without regard to the provisions of title 5 of the United States Code governing appointments in the competitive service and without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to the classification and General Schedule pay rates, may—

(1) appoint and fix the compensation of a director; and

(2) appoint and fix the compensation of such additional personnel as the Commission determines necessary to assist it to carry out its duties and functions.

(d) On the request of the Commission, the heads of executive agencies, the General Accounting Office, and the Office of Technology Assessment may furnish the Commission with such personnel and support services as the head of the agency, or office, and the chairperson of the Commission agree are necessary to assist the Commission to carry out its duties and functions. The Commission shall not be required to pay, or reimburse any, agency or office of personnel and support services provided under this subsection.

(e) The Commission shall be exempt from sections 7(d), 10(e), 10(f), and 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 2, 1 et seq.).

(f) The Commission shall be exempt from the requirements of sections 4301 through 4305 of title 5 of the United States Code.

SEC. 105. (a) Following the appointment or designation of the members of the National Commission on the Natural Resources Disasters, notwithstanding the provisions of section 1342 of title 31 of the United States Code, the Secretary of Agriculture may receive on behalf of the Commission, from persons, groups, and entities within the United States, contributions of money and services to assist the Commission in carrying out its duties and functions. Any money contributed under this section shall be made available to the Commission to carry out this Act. In no event may the Secretary accept an aggregate amount of contributions from any one person, group, or entity exceeding 10 per centum of the budget of the Commission.

(b) If the contributions under subsection (a) are insufficient to carry out this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture may transfer to the Commission, from the general fund of the Treasury, an amount not to exceed $500,000 to carry out this Act.

SEC. 106. The National Commission on the Natural Resources Disasters shall cease to exist ninety days following the submission of its report to the Secretary of Agriculture.

TITLE II—FOREST FIREFIGHTING PLANNING AND COOPERATION

SEC. 201. The Congress finds that—

(1) it is in the best interest of the Nation to take swift action to rehabilitate burned forests, and an assessment of the situation is necessary to accomplish this; and

(2) volunteers should be trained to assist where possible.

ANNUAL REPORT ON REHABILITATION NEEDS RESULTING FROM FOREST FIRE DAMAGE

SEC. 202. Not later than six months after the date of enactment of this Act and April 1 of each year thereafter, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the Congress a detailed report on the rehabilitation needs of each national forest resulting from forest fire damage during the previous year. Each such report shall specify the needs with respect to reforestation, vegetation management, timber stand improvement, fish and wildlife habitat restoration, soil conservation, and recreation.

PLANNING FOR FIRE PROTECTION

SEC. 203. (a) VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS.—The Secretary of Agriculture, through the Forest Service, shall annu-

ally offer training programs to certify volunteers for suppressing forest fires on National Forest System lands in the event that the Secretary determines that such volunteers are needed. In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary should use local educational facilities, including institutions established pursuant to the Act of July 2, 1862 (7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.; commonly known as the "Morrill Act"), or the Act of August 30, 1890 (7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.; commonly known as the "Second Morrill Act"). The Secretary of Agriculture may compensate certified volunteers in whatever manner he deems appropriate.

(b) MOBILIZATION OF LOCAL EQUIPMENT.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the Congress a report which documents local mobilization plans in cases of fire emergencies for firefighting equipment in each area of the National Forest System which is highly prone to forest fires.

Mr. VOLKMER. With that, I will now yield to the gentleman from the State of Washington.

Mr. MORRISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would first like to submit for the record the statement by our friend and colleague, Mr. Marlenee, as it relates to H.R. 1011.

Mr. VOLKMER. Without objection the statement will be entered into the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Marlenee follows:]

Statement by Mr. Marlenee
Subcommittee on Forestry,
Family Farms, and Energy
House Committee on Agriculture
Wednesday, March 15, 1989

Mr. Chairman:

I am happy to join with you and our Colleagues today to hear testimony relating to H.R.1011 introduced by Mr. Herger of California. This bill is a timely subject for our consideration especially in light of the terribly devastating forest fires and range fires which have plagued many areas of our Country in the past two to three years. These fire disasters have had far reaching impacts on our National Forest System lands, private lands adjoining National Forests, and on the entire economic and social fabric in surrounding areas.

We have witnessed the high degree of coordination and organization which goes into combatting many of these fires, with local, state, federal, and even international resources being brought to bear on the task of extinguishing the blazes. However, at the present time we do not have the same high degree of organization and

coordination in marshalling all available resources to deal with the lingering economic and social consequences of these disasters.

Obviously, when timber resources are lost then mills which do not have alternative sources must close their doors. As mill workers, suppliers, transporters, and related businesses are negatively impacted, the taxes needed to support schools and community services and infrastructure in surrounding areas fall more heavily upon a smaller number of individuals and businesses.

Mr. Chairman, this topic underscores the need not only to more efficiently coordinate all sources of assistance in rebuilding local and area economies and physical damage, but also points to the need for a much more flexible approach to Forest Service policy in regard to timber sales. Current policy creates lengthy delays in timber sale decision-making, and in instances following a devastating forest fire when some mills may not have available any substitute supply for a timbering area which was consumed by the blaze, such delay could lead to permanent closure of the mill and permanent loss of jobs. I would like to see the report of the National Commission on Natural

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Resources Disasters include an analysis of what changes we may want to make which would allow the Forest Service to expedite timber sales which may be necessary to keep one or more timber mills in operation following a loss of existing resources due to a fire or other natural disaster.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity for a hearing on the bill, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SID MORRISON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

Mr. MORRISON. Mr. Chairman, I would like to comment. The subcommittee handled both of the measures that are before us today, last year, H.R. 1011, putting forth the issue on national resource disasters was separated from the original wildfire package for getting it through rather quickly, and we look forward to our colleague from California's presentation today on this particular issue.

A big controversial one, of course, remains, the management of the Tongass Forest. We had a very thorough review last year, and then a rather rushed consideration because we were subject to a time consequential referral on this issue. I compliment our chairman because he has led us in the direction of introducing the bill before us today, H.R. 1368. I think we both look at it as a reasonable place to begin in that it includes those areas of jurisdiction of this subcommittee, and we believe in handling it this way there will be time for the committee to work its will.

So I look forward to the testimony today since we heard this, and we still have it in our mind—I hope that we will not have to repeat everything that we heard last year—that we can add to it and build on the record for the purpose of doing even a better job with this issue.

My own personal thought would be to emphasize for the members of the subcommittee that it is a beginning point, and we want time for this subcommittee and the full committee to work its will in dealing with this very difficult and complex and controversial issue of the management of the Tongass National Forest.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the allowing me to comment.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you.

Any other member wish to make a statement at this time?

[No response.]

Mr. VOLKMER. With that, we will begin with the testimony on H.R. 1011, and my colleague and good friend from California, you may open up with your statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. WALLY HERGER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for agreeing to hold this hearing today. I appreciate your willingness to give me the opportunity to discuss my legislation to establish a National Commission on Natural Resource Disasters in national forests. I commend you, again Mr. Chairman, for your continued interest in this crucial problem of improving our Federal response to wildfires in our national forests.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to thank you for bringing the subcommittee to northern California last year to see first-hand the significant damage wildfires caused in 9 of my 12 counties during 1987. As you may remember, lightening touched off hundreds of fires in 10 national forests in northern California alone in the fall of 1987. These fires burned more than 702,000 acres damaging more than 1.9 billion board feet of timber; 22,000 fire fighters were required to contain the blazes.

These fires caused local country timber receipt revenues to decline by an estimated $32 million over 3 years, offering a potentially devastating blow to local school districts, local road maintenance, and other vital services provided by county governments.

In response to the fires in my district, we formed a blue-ribboned task force of community leaders, local officials, Forest Service personnel, timber industry representatives, and environmentalists. This panel submitted a list of 18 recommendations for improving Federal fire-fighting policy which we brought to the attention of the Federal officials.

Several of the recommendations have since been implemented by the Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture, and as a result I believe that the format of such a panel could help us implement the goal of increasing public input of enhancing and improving Federal fire-fighting policies.

Mr. Chairman, in my prepared testimony I note comments made by many senior officials, including William Penn Mott, of the Park Service who have agreed that we should incorporate more public comment opportunities into the framing of Federal wildfire-response policies. Clearly, our local community leaders who have experienced a wildfire emergency are in an excellent position to tell us what has worked well, and what could be improved.

While I recognized that the Forest Service makes an effort to solicit this input, I strongly believe that this legislation can provide the perfect forum for broadening the input available for a truly national survey of the needs of the communities which experienced the wildfire disasters.

While in the last Congress a number of concerns were raised from the administration concerning the funding mechanism of the commission contained in the bill—I would like to point out that these concerns are being addressed in the bill before us today.

I do not wish to take anymore of the committee's time on this subject given the heavy press of business before us. Let me simply say that I appreciate the committee's willingness to focus on this issue today, and in particular I appreciate the chairman's willingness to revisit this issue.

As you will recall from last year this legislation was included in a key-piece of wildfire legislation offered by our chairman. I thank the chairman today for his willingness to revisit this issue.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Herger appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. VOLKMER. The commission believes that the provisions that the members of the commission would be pretty much representatives of all of the States that are affected by fire fighting of fires——

Mr. HERGER. That would be the intention, Mr. Chairman, yes.

Mr. VOLKMER. Of the fire areas bureaus would be represented on?

Mr. HERGER. That is correct.

Mr. VOLKMER. And the commission would determine any factors as they would pertain to this particular automatically, by law, would determine?

Mr. HERGER. That is correct.

Mr. VOLKMER. How much money do you envision that this is going to cost?

Mr. HERGER. We feel it would be a maximum of $500,000, however, we are willing to work with the Forest Service. I was talking with their officials in the last few days to hopefully fund almost all of it through staff or local sources.

Mr. VOLKMER. In other words, the existing staff and perhaps contributions from State and local or Federal agencies or private corporations, or something like that?

Mr. HERGER. That is correct.

Mr. VOLKMER. You have a provision here for contributions. I notice that it would be no more than 10 percent from one company.

Mr. HERGER. That is correct. We are willing to work with the Forest Service to even increase that amount.

Mr. VOLKMER. All right.

I have no further questions. The gentleman from the State of Washington.

Mr. MORRISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that was completely frustrating in this major task that you had in your area, was the difficulty of the salvage sales—was it the intention for you to take on that process of the salvage sales could be handled expeditiously if we still have an appeals procedure?

Mr. HERGER. That is one of our recommendations; yes. It would be to handle all of the concerns that happen in preparing for the next fire, should it take place, and also to help alleviate some of the problems that you are referring to that we have experienced in being able to go in and salvage in time so we do not lose the value of the timber that was burned, and is potentially salvageable.

Mr. MORRISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. OLIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to compliment the gentleman from California for his creativeness, and the clarity for finding some improvements in a very important and difficult area.

Mr. HERGER. Thank you.

Mr. OLIN. On the other hand, we briefly had some experience with the creation of measurements, as you know, and they turned out to be intransigent, and sometimes——

Mr. MORRISON. Is the gentleman from Virginia saying that it did not pay?

Mr. OLIN. Sometimes we found out that they were not much better than we are to the effect that sometimes they can be less able to deal with the controversial issues.

I am just wondering since the concept here would be to utilize, pretty much, the staff of the Forest Service, and whether this objective could not be reached by a means other than a manned commssion appointed and fixed conversation with the director and other personnel might be required.

It seems to me that, although the magnitude of the problem is great, the area of fighting the fires, the area of trying to take care of the salvage question, and take care of the major issues that are being dealt with. I just question a little bit whether we have those fires examined. Why doesn't he feel that this debate in the Forest

Service cannot solicit to the special interest in the public to accomplish the same objective?

Mr. HERGER. I know you had a number of fires in your district during the same time, as I recall. I do not know whether the situation was the same as ours, but there were tremendous frustrations, including the feeling that had there been a better all-over plan for what to do, including how to utilize local volunteers, such as a mechanism in place to have these volunteers trained in advance, we could have utilized people who knew the lay of the land.

We had a number of our people who were sent into other fires because they started primarily in the southern part of the State first, so we had people from virtually every State in the Nation that ended up in our area that we are very grateful for, but most of which did not know the lay of the land. If we had local people there, if there had been a mechanism for training these people so they could have gone out and seen to it that in the middle of the night we do not have people falling off cliffs, or something like this, we could have moved on the fire sooner.

The feeling was almost unanimous in our community that we could have put these fires out sooner, and there could have been a substantially lower loss of timber than we ultimately had.

The feeling is that by setting up a commission, and what you are reading is pretty much a standard for setting up a commission, and I must admit that my feelings toward commissions are perhaps not too different than what you have expressed. But I do feel that in the situation that we need public input that in addition to the efforts that are being made by the Forest Service, and they are making considerable efforts, but in addition that, this would help alleviate some of the problems so we do not have the same problems occurring again.

This is the purpose, and this is the feeling of the community blue-ribbon task force that I set up in our area—this was their recommendation that they felt would be helpful should there be another fire in our area or should there be one wherever it is in the Nation, whether it is Yellowstone or others.

Mr. OLIN. I would like to thank the gentleman for the information. I am still a little skeptical as to why we should not let the Forest Service handle the fire problems in the same manner.

Mr. HERGER. OK.

Mr. OLIN. Thank you very much.

Mr. VOLKMER. I thank the gentleman from Virginia. I thank the gentleman from California for his testimony, and I really appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

We will have, now, Mr. George Leonard, Associate Chief of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. I would appreciate your comments on this subject.

STATEMENT OF GEORGE M. LEONARD, ASSOCIATE CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. LEONARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There is no question that the major disasters, such as we had in California and Oregon in 1987 and in the northern Rocky Mountains, particularly around Yellowstone Park in 1988, can create se-

rious problems for those communities that are dependent on the resources from those forests that are affected, whether we are talking about the timber or recreation industry, the quality of water and the fisheries and wildlife are all seriously affected, and sometimes for very long periods of time after the smoke is gone—the impact of those fires would be felt.

Certainly, on a number of forests in California, harvest levels that will be sustainable into the future will be significantly impacted, and that means that those communities that have been dependent on past harvest levels are going to have a difficult job adjusting.

So we understand the concerns of Mr. Herger and his constituents in trying to find ways to help those communities make the transition, and also looking at ways and things that we can do in terms of fire-fighting readiness to reduce the chance that that is going to happen in the future.

We are concerned, however, in a period of necessary budgetary constraints about the costs associated with establishing a commission of this sort. We do believe that there are some other avenues to adjust those problems.

I think it is also true, particularly in northern California, we did not make as effective use of some of the local resources as we might have. Some of it was due to the lack of advanced training, but some of it was also due to simply the vastness of the problems that they had out there, and their inability to fully dispatch and make available, for example, some of the lumber company crews that would have been available to them and some local fire-fighting resources.

We understand the nature of the problem that Mr. Herger wants to address. We are concerned about the approach that he is suggesting in terms of a paid commission.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Leonard appears at the conclusion of the hearing.]

Mr. VOLKMER. I think that also comes into what the members of the subcommittee asked on the floor for additional costs, about $100,000. On our total budget that we have for October, right now, with our $100,000, where do we take it?

Mr. LEONARD. Presumably, we just displace other activities somewhere else.

Mr. VOLKMER. Do you have to displace some?

Mr. LEONARD. Yes.

Mr. VLADECK. You have to take it somewhere else, and I do not know any place other than the forest groups who have the extra money. That is the problem with me, of from where the money is coming. We can discuss that among ourselves later on.

Mr. LEONARD. I think, Mr. Chairman, that most of the members of that commission are envisioned to be appointed from State and local governments and whatnot, and it is not unreasonable to assume that if they are interested in being represented on the commission that a State or local government would pay the cost of their participants.

So I suspect there would be ways to substantially reduce the cost, and certainly we could staff some of the support that is needed for the commission out of Forest Service personnel.

There are probably ways to reduce the cost, but nevertheless there may be other ways to get the same thing.

Mr. VOLKMER. Thank you very much.

The gentleman from Washington.

Mr. MORRISON. What are your objections to title to fire training programs to certify volunteers? You think that is one of the areas that should be eliminated. Are you doing that now or do you feel your plans are adequate authority within the regions to handle whatever comes up?

Mr. LEONARD. We do have adequate authority to provide that training. It becomes a matter of judgment of how many people you do in fact train and have ready. Certainly, we were not ready for a disaster of the magnitude that hit northern California and southern Oregon at that point in time. You would like to be in a position to have a lot more volunteers and backup people ready.

I am not sure that it would be good business to train that many people everywhere in the country in the event that you might have such a disaster.

Again, I acknowledge that we did not make as good a use of some of the trained available local people as we might have in several of the forests in California.

Mr. MORRISON. My concern is that as I quoted the administration's budget proposal, this time around they are planning to cut back rather dramatically on the professional fire-fighting teams. Is that accurate?

Mr. LEONARD. That is correct. Of course, the area that we have relied on most heavily for providing backup people to our regular fire-fighting forces is the work that we get done through our cooperative fire-fighting program in the State and private area. We are working with the State forestry agencies. We have tried to achieve common organizations, common terminology so that we do have the capability of moving people back and forth both within the State, and then when the State's resources are exhausted, reaching outside the State and bringing people in.

Mr. MORRISON. They also provide State and private fire-fighting support service?

Mr. LEONARD. That is correct.

Mr. MORRISON. So I guess that under the bill, Mr. Chairman, we are concerned that we may have to rebuild both of them.

One of the reasons I join Mr. Herger in the cosponsorship of this bill is that as much confidence that we have in the operation of the Forest Service, I think it does not hurt for 1 minute to have some other folks look over your shoulder occasionally, make some recommendations, look at it a little bit differently.

So we will see if we maybe can offset some of the costs. Perhaps this commission might just be well worth—might save that series of jobs if we provide that tremendous expense.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your readiness, and Mr. Leonard thank you.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. OLIN. No questions.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. JONTZ. I have no questions.

Mr. VOLKMER. The gentleman from California.

Mr. HERGER. I have no questions.

Mr. VOLKMER. I was just wondering how presently the chairman of the volunteer fire fighters are qualified to fight the forest fires?

Mr. LEONARD. We have a system of what we call blue cards, which are issued to people who have what we believe to be adequate training and experience to fight fires, but are not members of our professional fire-fighting organization. For example, the people who are qualified to hold certain fire jobs in the Forest Service or in the State agencies are issued a red card that certifies to those qualifications. For the nonprofessional people involved, we do have a blue card system where we go out and provide training, basic fire-safety training, and equipment use of other kinds of training, and then we issue a blue card.

Anybody who has had that training will be listed on the dispatch program for the local forest so the forest knows exactly what people they have trained that season and are qualified to be dispatched to the fire without further training.

Now when we got into the situation in California and we ended up running out of crews, we actually established a number of training cadres and we were training people continuously and probably trained 800 or 900 individuals, and fit them into crews during the period. As you recall, those fires lasted over a 6- or 8-week period, and as we exhausted crews we trained more and brought them in.

But the system is in place, but as I acknowledged we probably did not use it as effectively as we should have in that situation.

Mr. VOLKMER. Pardon?

Mr. LEONARD. We probably did not use it as effectively as we should have in 1987.

Mr. VOLKMER. But you have the system in effect already?

Mr. LEONARD. Yes.

Mr. VOLKMER. I have no further questions.

With that we will conclude the hearing on H.R. 1011, and we will proceed with the next item H.R. 1368.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—See Serial No. 101-4 (pt. 2) for continuation of the March 15, 1989, hearing on H.R. 1368, the Tongass Timber Management Act.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record on H.R. 1011 follows:]

STATEMENT BY CONGRESSMAN WALLY HERGER
BEFORE THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FORESTS, FAMILY FARMS AND ENERGY
MARCH 15, 1989

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN.

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND YOU FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING TODAY. AS MOST OF US HERE ARE AWARE, THE ISSUE OF FOREST FIRE DISASTERS IS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ONE. THESE FIRES HAVE HIT MANY PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES PARTICULARLY HARD OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, AND THE CONTINUED DROUGHT IN MANY OF THESE SAME AREAS IS CERTAINLY CAUSE FOR ALARM REGARDING THE UPCOMING FIRE SEASON OF THIS YEAR. AS SUCH, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CHAIRMAN FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING, AND I GREATLY APPRECIATE BEING GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE ON WHY I BELIEVE THAT MY LEGISLATION, H.R. 1011 IS VITAL AT THIS TIME.

DURING THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1987, LIGHTNING TOUCHED OFF HUNDREDS OF FIRES IN 10 NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ALONE. SIX OF THESE NATIONAL FORESTS ARE IN MY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT. THESE FIRES CAUSED AN HISTORIC, UNPRECEDENTED AMOUNT OF ACREAGE TO BE DAMAGED. BY OCTOBER FIFTH OF THAT YEAR, OVER 702,000 ACRES OF CALIFORNIA TIMBER LAND HAD BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED BY THESE MASSIVE FIRES. MORE THAN 22,000 DETERMINED FIRE FIGHTERS WERE NEEDED TO CONTAIN THE BLAZES. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE AREA BURNED WAS NATIONAL FOREST LANDS, WITH ESTIMATES OF THIS AMOUNT RANGING FROM 90 PERCENT TO 96 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL ACREAGE.

THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THESE FIRES RESULTED IN 1.954 BILLION BOARD FEET OF TIMBER BURNED IN 10 OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS OF

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. THE LOSS OF SUCH A LARGE VOLUME OF TIMBER TRANSLATES INTO CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP FOR THE COUNTY GOVERNMENTS WHICH DEPEND HEAVILY UPON FEDERAL TIMBER RECEIPTS FOR BASIC REVENUES. THE ESTIMATED DECLINE IN TIMBER RECEIPTS TO NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNTIES DUE TO THE FIRES IS $32 MILLION, OR 15 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL RECEIPTS, OVER THE THREE YEAR PERIOD FROM FISCAL YEAR 1988 TO 1990. THIS ESTIMATE IS BASED ON FIGURES WHICH ANTICIPATE A PROMPT SALVAGE PROGRAM FOR THE BURNED TIMBER, AND ANY DELAYS IN THIS PROCESS WOULD RESULT IN EVEN HIGHER LOSSES TO THE COUNTIES.

I BELIEVE IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MAKE SPECIAL NOTE HERE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE TIMBER RECEIPTS TO RURAL COUNTY GOVERNMENTS. THIS LOSS OF REVENUE TO RURAL COMMUNITIES SERIOUSLY THREATENS THEIR ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO FINANCE AND MAINTAIN MANY BASIC SERVICES, INCLUDING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ROAD MAINTENANCE. AS SUCH, YOU CAN SEE HOW THESE FOREST FIRES CAN HAVE A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

IN RESPONSE TO THIS CRITICAL SITUATION, I ESTABLISHED A BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE, COMPOSED OF 33 PEOPLE FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, FOREST SERVICE PERSONNEL, ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS, WHICH WAS CONVENED FOR THE BASIC PURPOSE OF SURVEYING THE NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE. THE TASK FORCE ALSO WAS DESIGNED TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING FUTURE FIRE FIGHTING CAPABILITIES ON FEDERAL LANDS.

THE TASK FORCE IDENTIFIED THIRTY ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND/OR

OPPORTUNITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 1987 FIRE SIEGE. IN ORDER TO EFFICIENTLY ADDRESS EACH OF THESE ISSUES, THE TASK FORCE WAS DIVIDED INTO FOUR WORKING SUBCOMMITTEES, WHICH ARE LISTED AS FOLLOWS:

1. TIMBER MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
2. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES SUBCOMMITTEE
3. FINANCIAL IMPACT SUBCOMMITTEE
4. RECREATION AND REHABILITATION SUBCOMMITTEE

EACH SUBCOMMITTEE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADDRESSING THOSE ISSUES, CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES PERTINENT TO THEIR SPECIFIC DIVISION, AND FORMULATING SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO ME FROM WHICH COULD BE ACTED UPON FOR RESOLUTION.

THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF CREATING THE BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE WAS TO MINIMIZE SHORT AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOREST FIRE CATASTROPHE. IN ADDITION, RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP PREVENT SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES FROM RECURRING WERE PURSUED, AS WERE RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RECOVERY ALTERNATIVES. IN OTHER WORDS, THE TASK FORCE WAS A SOURCE OF PUBLIC INPUT FOR ME, THIS SUBCOMMITTEE AND ALSO THE FOREST SERVICE FOR THE PURPOSE OF MODIFYING AND IMPROVING THE FEDERAL RESPONSE TO THE FIRES AND MITIGATING THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH RESULTED FROM THEM.

I WOULD LIKE TO LIST THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE IN AN EFFORT TO DEMONSTRATE HOW THIS WAS A USEFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION. THE FOLLOWING LIST IS ORGANIZED IN FOUR CATEGORIES AND A DESIGNATION IS MADE BETWEEN LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:

CATEGORY #1 (LONG-TERM REHABILITATION OF FOREST RESOURCES)

LEGISLATIVE ACTION:

1) A DETAILED REPORT FORM EACH NATIONAL FOREST ON TOTAL REHABILITATION NEEDS FOR REFORESTATION, VEGETATION MANAGEMENT, TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT RESTORATION, SOIL CONSERVATION, AND RECREATION NEEDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE 1987 FIRES SHOULD BE PREPARED.

2) BASED ON THE ESTIMATED COST OF THESE RECOVERY PLANS, CONGRESS SHOULD PASS A BILL AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF NEEDED FUNDS TO BE SET INTO A REVOLVING ACCOUNT FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD OF TIME. FUNDING DEPOSITED INTO THIS ACCOUNT MAY BE ABOVE AND BEYOND THAT GENERATED THROUGH NORMAL APPROPRIATIONS AND SALVAGE SALES.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION:

1) PRIOR TO EXPENDITURES, DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLANS SHOULD BE PREPARED BY THE FOREST SERVICE AND OPEN TO PUBLIC REVIEW, DOCUMENTING HOW FUNDS WILL BE EXPENDED. THESE PLANS WILL BE PREPARED ON WATERSHED AND SUB-WATERSHED LEVELS OF DETAIL FOR LANDS AFFECTED BY THE FIRES.

2) STRONG COOPERATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN ALL PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES ARE TO BE ENCOURAGED. ACQUISITION OF SEED, FOR EXAMPLE, FROM ALL AVAILABLE SOURCES SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED AND INITIATED IMMEDIATELY. CLOSE COOPERATION OF TECHNICAL PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES AS WELL AS AVAILABLE INDUSTRY MANPOWER AND EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE INITIATED SOON AS TO ASSURE TIMELY "ON THE GROUND" ENHANCEMENT OF FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, WATERSHED VEGETATION, ETC.

3) "OPERATION PHOENIX" SHOULD BE FULLY SUPPORTED AND UTILIZED DURING THE SHORT AND LONG-TERM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS. VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE UTILIZED WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO NOT ONLY HELP ENHANCE NATURAL RESOURCES, BUT ALSO INCREASE PUBLIC

AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT.

CATEGORY #2 (APPEALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS)

LEGISLATIVE

1) TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOREST SERVICE PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS PROCESS IS NECESSARY. THIS PROPOSAL HAS BEEN "IN THE MAKINGS" FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS NOW, BUT THE FINAL DRAFT HAS BEEN UNDULY DELAYED.

2) A DUAL TRACK APPEALS REVIEW PROCEDURE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED. FIRE SALVAGE APPEALS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ON ONE TRACK WHILE ALL OTHER APPEALS ARE CONSIDERED ON THE OTHER. DECISIONS ON APPEALS ON FIRE SALVAGE SALES MUST BE MADE EXPEDITIOUSLY.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION:

1) THE FOREST SERVICE SHOULD TAKE SEVERAL PROACTIVE STEPS TO AVOID AND RESOLVE CONFLICT BEFORE AN APPEAL IS FILED. SALVAGE SALES MOST LIKELY TO CREATE CONFLICT MUST BE IDENTIFIED BEFORE A DECISION IS REACHED. SPECIAL PROCEDURES SHOULD BE USED FOR THESE PROJECTS, SUCH AS COMMUNITY MEETINGS DIRECTED AT WORKING THROUGH RESOLVABLE CONFLICTS. ADDITIONALLY, THE FOREST SERVICE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS CONCERNED ABOUT AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OR ISSUES IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO FINAL DECISION AND ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE ANY CONFLICTS BEFORE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IS RELEASED. PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT AND DECISIONS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT TO BE REPLACED BY "CLOSED-DOOR NEGOTIATIONS".

2) SALVAGE SALES MUST BE PROPERLY PREPARED AND IMPLEMENTED. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS FOR SALVAGE SALES MUST HAVE A FULL RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES, AND BE READILY AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW.

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THE FOREST SERVICE SHOULD FULLY DISCUSS ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS PERFORMED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SO THE PUBLIC CAN REVIEW THE EVALUATIONS MADE.

3) DISTRICTS OR FORESTS SHOULD PERFORM CUMULATIVE WATERSHED IMPACT ANALYSIS ON BURNED SUB-WATERSHEDS IN SALVAGE SALE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UTILIZING BOTH RELEVANT MODELS AND PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS OF THE FIRES AND SALVAGE ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE MADE ON MAJOR WATERSHEDS THAT SUSTAINED DAMAGE DURING THE FIRES.

4) THE FOREST SERVICE SHOULD ALWAYS IDENTIFY THOSE SALVAGE SALES "LEAST" LIKELY TO PRODUCE CONFLICT OR ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND EXPEDITE THEM VIA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS, ETC. IN ORDER TO QUICKLY EMPLOY AVAILABLE HARVESTING AND MILLING RESOURCES ON SALVAGE TIMBER WHILE MORE COMPLEX SALES ARE PREPARED. IN ADDITION, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE FOREST SERVICE NEED TO AGAIN TALK TO THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND REQUEST SUGGESTIONS BY WHICH NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT GUIDELINES CAN BE STREAMLINED IN SITUATIONS WHERE ADVERSE IMPACTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE MINIMAL.

CATEGORY #3 (IMPROVED PLANNING FOR FIRE PROTECTION)

LEGISLATIVE AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION:

1) TRAINING PROGRAMS TO CERTIFY INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS AS FIRE-FIGHTERS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE.

2) EACH NATIONAL FOREST SHOULD PREPARE A REPORT BY JUNE 1 ANNUALLY THAT DOCUMENTS HOW LOCAL EQUIPMENT WILL BE MOBILIZED IN CASE OF A FIRE EMERGENCY.

3) MORE PRESCRIBED BURNING NEEDS TO BE DONE.

4) LIVESTOCK SHOULD BE EVALUATED AS A TOOL TO CONTROL GRASS IN

PLANTATIONS AND FOREST LANDS, REDUCING FIRE HAZARDS AND COMPETING VEGETATION.

CATEGORY #4 (NEED FOR IMMEDIATE SALVAGE OPERATIONS)

LEGISLATIVE AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION REQUIRED:

1) CONSTANT CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE NEEDS TO BE PLACED ON THE FOREST SERVICE IN ORDER TO ASSURE THAT 90 PERCENT OF THE SALVAGE VOLUME WILL BE OFFERED BY DECEMBER 31, 1988, IN THE CASE OF THE 1987 FIRES.

2) FORESTS SEVERELY IMPACTED BY THE 1987 FIRE SIEGE SHOULD RELEASE A BI-WEEKLY REPORT AS A MEANS BY WHICH CONGRESS, INDUSTRY AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY CAN MONITOR AND EVALUATE PROGRESS BEING MADE.

3) SPECIAL FOREST SERVICE TASK FORCES SHOULD BE DISPATCHED TO FORESTS FALLING BEHIND THEIR TIME SCHEDULE. SUCH TASK FORCES SHOULD BE COMPRISED OF EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL, COMPETENT AND QUICK TO MAKE PROFESSIONAL DECISIONS AND JUDGEMENT CALLS.

THE PURPOSE OF LISTING THESE RECOMMENDATIONS IS TO GIVE THE SUBCOMMITTEE AN IDEA OF HOW PRODUCTIVE THE TASK FORCE WAS IN TERMS OF PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY INPUT. A FEW OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE IN FACT BEEN WHOLLY OR PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED BY THE FOREST SERVICE. PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATION TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO THIS POINT INVOLVES THE REVISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS PROCESS FOR PROPOSED TIMBER SALES. WHILE EFFORTS TO REFORM THE APPEALS PROCESS HAD BEEN UNDERWAY, THE TASK FORCE'S RECOMMENDATION CONTRIBUTED TO THE FOREST SERVICE'S DECISION TO IMPLEMENT A TWO TRACK SYSTEM FOR EXPEDITING SALVAGE TIMBER APPEALS AND STREAMLINED THE REGULATIONS FOR GREEN SALE APPEALS. THESE REFORMS HAVE RESULTED IN EXPEDITED

SALVAGE SALES IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH EVENTUALLY TRANSLATES INTO INCREASED REVENUES AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SERVICES SUCH AS SCHOOLS, ROADS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT. THIS IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS GENERATED BY PUBLIC INPUT FROM THE TASK FORCE'S WORK.

SINCE THE FIRES OF 1987 WHICH RAVAGED NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND PARTS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES, WE HAVE SEEN EVEN MORE FIRES ON FEDERAL LANDS. THIS YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 1 MILLION ACRES OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK WERE BURNED. IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON, OVER 137,000 ACRES OF FEDERAL FOREST SERVICE LAND WERE BURNED IN 1988. IN THIS PAST YEAR, OVER 72,000 FOREST FIRES BURNED SEVERAL MILLION ACRES ACROSS THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES. AS SUCH, THIS HAS BECOME A TRULY NATIONAL CONCERN WHICH I BELIEVE MUST BE DEALT WITH EFFECTIVELY AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL.

I BELIEVE THAT THE NEED FOR INCREASED PUBLIC INPUT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BECAME MORE APPARENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE UNPRECEDENTED FIRES IN AND AROUND YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK IN 1988. THIS VIEW WAS WELL ESTABLISHED AT A JOINT HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS AND THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE ON JANUARY 31, 1989. WILLIAM PENN MOTT, JR., DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, INFORMED THOSE AT THE HEARING THAT THE PARK SERVICE SAW A NEED FOR "INTERPRETATION TO INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF FIRE ECOLOGY...AND COORDINATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND/OR FUND RAISING EFFORTS" WITH REGARD TO FIRE MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY POLICY. JAMES E. BROWN OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS RECOMMENDED THAT "COORDINATION WITH COOPERATION AGENCIES AND ADJACENT LANDOWNERS FOR COLLECTION OF THEIR INPUT" SHOULD BE A TOP PRIORITY. GERALD

J. GRAY, DIRECTOR OF RESOURCE POLICY FOR THE AMERICAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION, RECOMMENDED THAT THE "FIREFIGHTING COMMUNITY, COMPRISED OF THE PARK SERVICE, FOREST SERVICE AND OTHER FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES, ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO PREPARE NEW AND CONSISTENT GUIDELINES THAT RECOGNIZE THE INCREASING THREAT FROM FIRE".

MOREOVER, THE FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW TEAM, ESTABLISHED JOINTLY BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND INTERIOR ISSUED A DETAILED REPORT ON DECEMBER 14, 1988 WHICH ALSO STRONGLY RECOMMENDED AN INCREASED NEED FOR PUBLIC INPUT. THE REPORT INCLUDES A RECOMMENDATION WHICH STATES THAT "AGENCIES WILL INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHEN REVISING OR DEVELOPING FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANS". THE REPORT WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THERE IS A NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH RELATED TO FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS." I CITE THIS REPORT AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF PEOPLE AT THE YELLOWSTONE HEARING IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THERE IS A REAL NEED FOR INCREASED PUBLIC INPUT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ON THE ISSUES THE COMMISSION WOULD STUDY. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE COMMISSION COULD, ON A NATIONAL SCALE, CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE POLICY MAKING PROCESS IN ORDER TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF AMERICANS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY AFFECTED BY FOREST FIRES ON FEDERAL LANDS.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON NATURAL RESOURCES DISASTERS WOULD BE A UNIQUE WAY OF ATTEMPTING TO FILL THIS NEED FOR INCREASED PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE POLICY PROCESS. IT WOULD DO SO BY REPRESENTING A DIVERSE ARRAY OF INTERESTS THROUGH THE PEOPLE APPOINTED TO SERVE ON IT. ESSENTIALLY, THE COMMISSION WOULD

CONSIST OF 25 PERSONS, APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO SERVE VOLUNTARILY. OF THE 25 MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, AT LEAST 20 OF THE 25 NOMINATIONS WOULD BE MADE BY THE CHAIRMEN AND RANKING MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY. THIS WOULD ENSURE A COMMISSION WITH BALANCED VIEWS, COMPOSED OF PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISSUES AT HAND. ALSO, I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT THIS WOULD BE A TRULY NATIONAL COMMISSION, CONTAINING MEMBERS FROM ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY AFFECTED BY FOREST FIRES ON FEDERAL LANDS. THE DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY WHICH WOULD BE PROVIDED BY THIS NATIONAL CHARACTER WOULD SURELY BE BENEFICIAL TO FEDERAL POLICY-MAKERS IN MANY WAYS.

THE COMMISSION WOULD STUDY THE EFFECTS OF FIRES ON THE ECONOMIC STABILITY OF THE AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, THE AVAILABILITY OF SUFFICIENT TIMBER SUPPLIES TO MEET FUTURE INDUSTRY NEEDS, THE FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITATS, RECREATION IN THE AFFECTED AREAS, WATERSHED AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION PLANS IN EFFECT WITHIN NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS, ECOSYSTEMS IN THE AREAS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS OF THE AFFECTED NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS. ON THE BASIS OF ITS STUDY, THE COMMISSION WOULD MAKE FINDINGS AND DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE WITH RESPECT TO THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS AND COMMUNITY RE-DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS. ALSO, THE COMMISSION WOULD SUBMIT TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 1, 1990, A REPORT CONTAINING THE RESULTS OF ITS STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON SUCH RESULTS.

I WOULD LIKE TO NOTE AT THIS POINT THAT, ALTHOUGH FEDERAL POLICY-MAKERS WOULD HAVE THE BENEFIT OF SUCH INPUT, THEY WOULD IN NO WAY BE BOUND BY THE ANYTHING THE COMMISSION WOULD RECOMMEND. IT WOULD NOT PLACE ANY LIMITATIONS ON CURRENTLY EXISTING OR FUTURE FOREST SERVICE MANAGEMENT PLANS. IT WOULD SIMPLY SERVE AS AN ADVISORY PANEL AND SOURCE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE FOREST SERVICE. I HAVE EXPERIENCED THE POSITIVE INPUT OF THE TASK FORCE WHICH THE COMMISSION IS BASED ON, AND I KNOW HOW VALUABLE INPUT FROM CONCERNED COMMUNITY LEADERS CAN BE. MR. CHAIRMAN, YOU WILL RECALL MEETING SEVERAL OF THE MEMBERS OF MY ORIGINAL TASK FORCE WHEN YOU VISITED MY DISTRICT LAST YEAR. AT HEARINGS HELD IN REDDING, CALIFORNIA, WE HEARD TESTIMONY REGARDING THE LENGTHY DELAYS OF SALVAGE TIMBER SALES AND THE EFFECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROBLEM. WE ALSO WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO TAKE A HELICOPTER RIDE WHICH ENABLED US TO VIEW THE DIFFERENCES IN AREAS WHICH WERE EFFECTIVELY SALVAGED IN THE PAST AND OTHERS WHICH HAD NOT BEEN EFFECTIVELY SALVAGED. I BELIEVE THE CHAIRMAN WOULD AGREE WITH ME THAT THESE ACTIVITIES AND THE TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS WERE TRULY VALUABLE IN HELPING US, AS LEGISLATORS, MAKE TOUGH POLICY DECISIONS ON THESE MATTERS.

AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND THE CHAIRMAN FOR HOLDING A HEARING ON THIS LEGISLATION TODAY. AS MANY OF YOU MAY KNOW, A SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR VERSION OF THIS BILL WAS INCORPORATED INTO H.R. 4936, THE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1988, INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN. AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CHAIRMAN FOR HOLDING THIS HEARING AND AGREEING TO REVISIT THIS

IMPORTANT ISSUE. I ALSO WISH TO THANK THE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN MY LEGISLATION.

LAST YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION EXPRESSED A NUMBER OF CONCERNS ABOUT MY LEGISLATION AS WRITTEN IN THE 10100TH CONGRESS. I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE ADDRESSING THE ADMINISTRATION'S CONCERNS IN THE BILL BEFORE US TODAY. I HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE FOREST SERVICE ON THESE ISSUES AND AM WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS THEY MIGHT HAVE. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THEIR TESTIMONY TODAY AND ALSO TO WORKING WITH THEM IN THE FUTURE ON THIS AND OTHER MATTERS.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT H.R. 1011 WOULD SERVE AS A VALUABLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE FEDERAL RESPONSE TO FOREST FIRES ON NATIONAL LANDS AND MITIGATING THE CONSEQUENTIAL DAMAGE TO SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES. THE ORIGINAL BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE DID A GREAT JOB IN ITS CONTEXT, AND I BELIEVE THAT THE NATION WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH AN IDEA ON A NATIONAL SCALE. PEOPLE FROM THE WESTERN STATES, THE YELLOWSTONE AREA AND THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE U.S. WOULD CERTAINLY BENEFIT FROM THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND IDEAS ON THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT. I BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD ENABLE US TO DEVELOP A MOST EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO FOREST FIRES.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN, FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THIS STATEMENT.

STATEMENT OF
GEORGE M. LEONARD, ASSOCIATE CHIEF
FOREST SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Subcommittee on Forests, Family Farms and Energy
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives

Concerning H.R. 1011, a bill "To provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters, to provide for increased planning and cooperation with local firefighting forces in the event of forest fires, and for other purposes."

March 15, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer before this subcommittee to offer the Department of Agriculture's views on H.R. 1011, a bill "To provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters, to provide for increased planning and cooperation with local firefighting forces in the event of forest fires, and for other purposes".

Title I of H.R. 1011 would create a 25-member National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters of which 20 members would be appointed by nominations from specified members of Congress to study the effects of fires and to make recommendations concerning the transition from the loss of natural resources. The commission would study the effects of the fires on the affected communities, make findings, and develop recommendations for consideration by the Secretary with respect to management of National Forest System lands and community redevelopment activities.

Title II would also require the Secretary, through the Forest Service, to annually offer training programs to certify volunteers for suppressing forest

fires on National Forest System lands in the event that the Secretary determines that such volunteers are needed. The Secretary would be required, within one year of enactment, to submit to the Congress a report which documents local mobilization plans in cases of fire emergencies for firefighting equipment in each area of the National Forest System which is highly prone to forest fires.

Mr. Chairman, we routinely conduct damage and rehabilitation assessments following forest and rangeland fires that address mitigation measures related to fish and wildlife habitat, watershed rehabilitation, soil erosion, timber salvage, reforestation needs, and other concerns.

There are several notable examples of post-fire recovery assessments, and I would like to describe two of them.

Forest Service in Region 5 (California), after the 1987 fire season, implemented "Operation Phoenix", a partnership of public and private agencies, individuals, and organizations working together toward the recovery of lands damaged and affected by the fires. Operation Phoenix is one of the largest cooperative programs ever undertaken by Federal, State, and private organizations in California. A major portion of this rehabilitation has been completed.

Second, after the disastrous 1988 fire season, the Secretary of Agriculture established a high-level interagency task group to expedite USDA responses to requests for assistance.
Assistant Secretary Dunlop chaired the USDA Fire Economic Recovery Task Force.

The Department's efforts included four major elements:

(1) Immediate emergency rehabilitation of areas disturbed by fire suppression activities.

(2) Interagency post-fire recovery teams prescribed emergency and long-term treatment measures for each fire.

(3) A Washington Office team coordinated various post-fire recovery teams within the Forest Service.

(4) An interdepartmental fire recovery team was formed for the Greater Yellowstone Area.

We believe our damage and rehabilitation assessment and the resulting actions have, and will continue to, adequately respond to the needs of the land and theaffected communities. Therefore, we believe that the Commission required by Title I of H.R. 1011 is unnecessary.

We believe the direction in Title II is not necessary, since we also prepared detailed rehabilitation reports after each major fire, and moreover we have adequate authority to train and hire volunteer firefighters. Currently, these training programs are initiated and carried out at the Regional and Forest level by the Forest Service. Many of these programs are carried out in cooperation with local colleges and universities, where interested students are recruited and trained to fight fire for the Forest Service. However, there may be areas where this authority to train and hire volunteer firefighters is not used to its full potential authority. Section 203(b) is not needed because annual mobilization plans are currently prepared at the Forest, Regional, and National level annually in conjunction with other fire

season preparedness activities. These plans are available for congressional and public review.

In summary, we believe the bill is unnecessary. We are now meeting the objectives of H.R. 1011 under existing authorities, we support the concept of the establishment of the commission, however, we object to the use of any Federal funds to establish or maintain such a commission. We believe Title II of the bill is unnecessary, as we now have existing authority to meet the objectives of Title II.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would be happy to answer your questions or provide any additional information you may desire.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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California State Senate

JIM NIELSEN
Senator
Fourth District
Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Lake, Napa, Shasta and
Tehama Counties and a portion of Sonoma County

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SENATE RURAL CAUCUS, VICE CHAIRMAN
STATE ALLOCATION BOARD

March 20, 1989

The Honorable Harold L. Volkmer
House of Representatives
House Agriculture Subcommittee
c/o Tim DeCoster
1336 Longworth
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Volkmer:

It has come to my attention that Congressman Wally Herger has introduced a measure, HR 1011, which would establish a National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters. This Commission would study the effects of disastrous fires on federal, state and private lands and make recommendations concerning the steps necessary for a smooth and timely transition from the loss of such natural resources. The areas to be studied include the economic stability of the affected communities, timber supplies for future needs, fish and wildlife habitats, recreation, watershed and water quality protections, ecosystems and management plans of the affected National Forest System lands.

Inasmuch as I represent many of the counties that Congressman Herger does, this measure is of great interest and importance to me and to the constituency we mutually serve. The disastrous fires which have occurred in recent years during the drought have had devastating effects not only upon our natural resources but on the financial, manpower, and equipment resources of the fire-fighting agencies. This bill would address the process to restore the resources of the affected areas and plan for future cooperative efforts between agencies and private landowners.

I would strongly urge you and your committee to seriously consider this bill in a favorable light when deliberating on it.

Thank you for your careful review of this important matter.

Sincerely,

JIM NIELSEN

cc: The Honorable Wally Herger

TRINITY COUNTY

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
P.O. Drawer 1258 (916) 623-1217
WEAVERVILLE, CALIFORNIA 96093
Barbara M. Rhodes, Clerk
David J. Andres, Administrative Officer

STATEMENT BY
TRINITY COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TRINITY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS, FAMILY FARMS AND ENERGY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
THE HONORABLE HAROLD L. VOLKMER, CHAIRMAN

MARCH 15, 1989
WASHINGTON, D.C.

STAN PLOWMAN District 1 | A. DEE POTTER District 2 | ARNOLD WHITRIDGE District 3 | HOWARD G. MYRICK District 4 | PATRICIA S. GARRETT District 5

Trinity County appreciates the opportunity to provide a written statement for inclusion in the permanent record of the hearing on H.R. 1011, which would establish a National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters.

Trinity County is located in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in the extreme northwest of California. In 1987 and 1988 major catastrophic fires occurred with the county.

After the Fire Siege of 1987, Congressman Wally Herger convened a Blue Ribbon Task Force to prepare a report on ways to minimize short and long-term impacts associated with fire catastrophes. In addition, recommendations; were made to help prevent similar circumstances from recurring, as were recommendations toward the establishment of recovery alternatives. The provisions within H.R. 1011 establishing a National Commission on Natural Resources Disaster and to provide for increased planning and cooperation with local firefighting forces in the event of forest fires were recommended by the Task Force.

We believe that a Commission is necessary to study the affects of catastrophic fires and make recommendations concerning the steps necessary for a transition from the loss of natural recources.

In particular, assessments, plans and adequate funds are needed to reforestate burned areas, rehabilitate watersheds, restore damaged fish and wildlife habitat and manage timber stands.

The economic stability of the affected communities needs to be studied. In Trinity County several of our communities were heavily impacted by the fires. The local economies are dependent on adequate timber supplies to keep the mills operating. If there is a reduction in available timber, some provision needs to be made, to assure an adequate supply of logs to local mills. The loss of jobs from closed mills would be especially harsh on rural communities located in mountainous areas. In these areas it is almost impossible to find replacement jobs. Typically 70-90% of the land base is federally owned, so land for development is severly limited.

These communities lack infrastructure to attract new businesses (water, sever, transportation). Expansion of recreation jobs is difficult unless the local communities are near spectacular attractions (Yosemite etc.). Encouraging retired persons is unattractive to many because of these communities lack of demanded services.

We believe that a Commission is necessary to study and make recommendations to help prevent similar circumstances from recurring.

More emphasis should be on prevention, pre-suppression activities. Historically funds have decreased for pre-suppression activities, yet they are effective and cost less than suppression activities.

* There needs to be more slash burning and prescribed burns to reduce fuel loads on the forest floors.
* There needs to be more Forest Service prevention officers to work with home-owners to properly make their homes fire safe.
* There needs to be a program to train local citizens in firefighting to be available for initial attack strike teams.
* There needs to be a program to have firefighting resources identified and signed up before fire season in the local communities (such as water pumps, generators, cats).
* There needs to be adequate fire engines on ranger districts for first response during the whole fire season. Many times they are pulled off to fight fires in other forests.
* There needs to be additional funds for initial attack forces (fire jumpers, borate bombers etc)
* Local airports should be utilized for the refueling of these initial attack forces thereby greatly reducing turnaround time.
* There needs to be better pre-attack plans between the Forest Service, local community resources and local fire department. Initial attack can greatly reduce the size of fires.
* There needs to be better coordination so that equipment can be exchanged between local fire fighting agencies and the Forest Service.

Because of the extraordinary conditions created by the forest fires of 1987 and 1988 and the adverse impacts on a relatively few number of counties, we would like Congress to consider the following recommendations:

* Enact H.R. 1011 establishing a National Commission on Natural Resources Disasters.

* Direct the Commission to study and make recommendations concerning the reforestation and rehabilitation of fisheries, wildlife and watersheds.

* Direct the Commission to study and make recommendations to assure for the economic stability of local communities dependent on lost resources caused by the catastrophic fires.

* Direct the Commission to study and make recommendations on preventative measures for pre-suppression activities that would reduce the magnitude of fires.